



## Explanations

Basic uses of articles are assumed known.

### Definite article

#### ■ Classes

This is one way to refer to classes, and is perhaps more formal than using a plural:

*The tiger is threatened with extinction.*

#### ■ National groups

Groups as a whole:

*The French eat in restaurants more than the English.*

Single examples are not formed in the same way:

*A Frenchman/woman, an Englishman/woman.*

#### ■ Other groups

If these are clearly plural:

*the Social Democrats, The Rolling Stones*

Note the difference:

*Pink Floyd, Queen (no article)*

#### ■ Unique objects

*the moon, the sun*

Note that there are other suns and moons in the universe.

*This planet has a small moon.*

#### ■ Titles

These tend to be 'unique'.

*The director of studies*

If the title is post-modified (has a description coming after the noun), *the* is more likely, but not essential. Compare:

*She became President in 1998.*

*She became (the) President of the United States in 1998.*

#### ■ Other titles

*The* may be part of the title, and so is capitalised.

Newspapers: *The Independent, The Sunday Times*

#### ■ Musical instruments

*Jane plays the flute.*

*The guitar is my favourite instrument.*

It is, of course, still possible to use *a* where it would naturally be used.

*There was a small brown flute in the window of the shop.*

■ **Emphatic use**

This is heavily stressed and emphasises the following noun.

*This hotel is **the** place to stay.*

See also Grammar 14.

■ **Geographical names**

The following use *the*:

Rivers: *the Thames*

Mountain ranges: *the Alps*

Oceans: *the Mediterranean*

Unique features: *the Channel, the Arctic*

Compass points/areas: *the East, the Middle East*

Countries: collective or plural: *The United Kingdom, The Netherlands*

This does not apply to:

Mountain peaks: *Everest* (but *The Matterhorn*)

Continents: *Asia*

Countries: *France*

The definite article is sometimes used before Lebanon and Gambia:

*The Lebanon    The Gambia*

■ **Place names**

Post-modification, especially with ... *of* ... plays a role in place names.

Compare:

*Leeds University/The University of Leeds*

*London Bridge/The Tower of London*

If the first part of a place-name is another name, then normal rules about zero article apply.

*Brown's Restaurant*

*The Garden House Hotel*

The same applies in geographical names:

*Canvey Island*

*The Isle of Man*

■ **Most and the most**

**Most** hotels in England are very expensive. (making a generalisation)

This is **the most expensive** hotel in town. (talking about a specific hotel)

■ **Importance of context**

The definite article refers to already mentioned items, and so its use depends on context.

*The Smiths had a son and a daughter. **The** son was in the Army and **the** daughter was training to be a doctor.*

*On **the** Saturday, there was a terrible storm.*

Here, *the Saturday* refers to a day in an area of time already mentioned.

*On the Saturday of **that** week ...*

## ADVANCED LANGUAGE PRACTICE

### Indefinite article

#### ■ Jobs

Compare: *Tony is **a** builder. Tony was **the** builder of that house.*

#### ■ In measuring

*Three times **a** week. Fifty kilometres **an** hour.*

*£3.50 **a** kilo. £15,000 **a** year.*

Formally, *per* can replace *a/an*.

#### ■ Unknown people

Use of *a/an* emphasises that a person is unknown.

*A Mr Jones called while you were out.*

### Zero article

#### ■ Names

Compare:

*Matthew Smith is one of my favourite artists. (a person)*

*A Matthew Smith hangs in their bedroom. (a painting)*

#### ■ Some unique organisations do not use *the*.

*Parliament, but The (House of) Commons*

#### ■ Streets

Most streets do not use an article.

*Green Road    Godwin Street*

Exceptions are:

*The High Street    The Strand*

and street names without preceding adjectives. Compare:

*Holly Drive    The Drive*

### Translation problems

Study these sentences. Would you use an article in your language?

I know how to use **a** computer.

**A** pound and **a** half of cheese.

I was holding it in **my** hand.

It's **a** film about homeless people.

Terry has flu. I've got **a** headache.